

U.S.-British Relations Seriously

By Flora Lewis

The Washington Post Foreign Service

LONDON, May 5—A serious strain has developed in Anglo-American relations over policy differences on Cuba and Egypt.

According to authoritative sources here, it came to a head during Foreign Minister R. A. Butler's visit to the White House last week. The irritation is seeping out into the open

now, with no sign of efforts to douse the flames.

The friction comes from conflicting policies. The British are saying the United States should get tough with Egypt because the proof of a good ally is showing you are on the same side. The Americans are saying exactly the same to the British about Cuba.

The story circulating widely in London, though not in

public, is that President Johnson was furious with Prime Minister Douglas-Home's behavior in Washington last February.

This report said they did not get on too well anyway, and the President was angered by the Prime Minister's quick press conference afterwards declaring he had resisted all pressure to block sales of British buses to Cuba.

When Butler reached Washington last week, this version continues, Mr. Johnson was waiting for him with his biggest stick. To get even, he blasted Butler about Cuba for a solid 15 minutes and dismissed the foreign minister without a chance to squeak back.

'... Until He Yelped'

Some echoes of the report have reached print. Today one paper said British diplomats were "incensed" at the treatment of Butler. It quoted an "Johnson held up the foreign secretary by his ears until he yelped."

In such seasons of strain, the mutual annoyance does not seem to carry very strongly through the bureaucratic levels below the political leadership.

Some sources suggested in fact that the policy differences, which are of long standing, are not causing more trouble now because they have worsened particularly, but because both capitals are preparing for elections.

This year, for the first time since the alliance, the U.S. and Britain will vote within a few weeks or possibly a few days of each other.

The issue of Egypt's Middle East ambitions and the fighting in Southern Arabia is

blowing London out of its political doldrums, setting off angry but diffuse crossfire in Parliament and the press.

The Labor opposition said in the Commons today that it was "most improper" for the British commander of Middle East land forces to release "on such scanty evidence" the story that two British soldiers had been decapitated in the Yemen.

Full Report Ordered

Home told the House that the story had not been confirmed. He promised to "take the necessary steps to see that such a situation (release of inflammatory rumors) does not recur."

The commander, Maj. Gen. John Cubbon, has been ordered by the Secretary of the Army to report "the full circumstances" of his statement. Army circles speculated that further discipline, possibly his replacement, may be coming.

There is some kind of trouble inside the Army over the South Arabian situation as well, though the details remain hidden.

Brig. Gen. Maurice MacWilliam, who had been seconded as head of the South Arabian Federal Forces, quit his post and returned to England last week after just two weeks on the job.

Speculation is that he quarrelled with Cubbon, urging a more active British military campaign against rebels and possibly retaliatory moves across the Yemen border — rather like American military arguments to strike across Korea's Yalu River, or into North Vietnam.

Since MacWilliam's return, however, the operation inside South Arabia has been intensified. Reports from Aden said a company of 120 British para-

Strained

troopers broke out of a Bedouin trap in a mudhut village tonight after having been pinned down nearly 12 hours by tribesmen.

British Use Bayonets

According to Associated Press, the British lost two dead and 10 wounded in fighting with the rebels who call themselves the Red Wolves of Radfan. At least six rebels were killed.

The 120 paratroopers had bayonet-charged their way into the village in the Al Muzahim Basin at dawn, according to AP. After fierce fighting, the rebels withdrew to the surrounding heights and sniped at anything that moved in the village. The British reportedly moved onto the heights at sundown. The wounded were removed by air to Aden.

There has been no public argument here about the conduct of the campaign to stop South Arabians from fighting the British with arms and money obtained in the Yemen. But the London Times cast its grave doubt on whether Britain should take on at all what it called a "war by proxy" with Egypt's President Nasser.

Top officials say sternly that Nasser is challenging Britain's whole position in the Middle East through the Yemeni and South Arabian fighting, and that the position can be, must be, and will be held.